[667] Moreover, twenty-five percent of the native
563 Belorussian population professed Catholicism, while seventy-five
[998] percent was Orthodox. Even before the revolution the Catholic priests, and they were almost all Poles, made propaganda in the Catholic churches to the effect that all who professed Catholicism were Poles. As a matter of fact these "Poles" had not even mastered the Polish
563 language and were Belorussian by nationality. In the heyday of the
661 nationalities policy, the Polish Communists, perhaps only for reasons of propaganda and of course under the auspices and with the permission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, renamed the whole Koydanovskiy Rayon, which is situated on the Polish-Belorussian boundary and has a Belorussian population of some thirty thousand, the Polish National Rayon. Kaydanov (sic), the rayon center, was renamed Dzerzhinsk and the whole rayon called Dzerzhinskiy. In the rayon center, on the square dedicated to the fierce, even though dead, chief of the rayon, a monument was erected to Dzerzhinskii which portrayed him standing straight up on a pedestal in a full-length soldier's overcoat and with a long face and a small beard. In the National Rayon compulsory promulgation of the Polish language was begun, a measure which the population had difficulty in comprehending. All institutions, schools, and village reading-rooms were changed over to Polish and the rayon newspaper came out in Polish. The population was mystified by these newly-created difficulties. After 1930, all the efforts to organize the Polish National Rayon in the name of Dzerzhinskii were pronounced a diversion of Polish spies. The higher leaders and organizers of the rayon were arrested and punished severely. Such a fate also overtook the Shestakovskiy Polish Soviet, named after the Polish communist Markhlevskii, in the Kopyl' Rayon, Minsk Oblast'. The Dzerzhinskiy Rayon retained the name of its chief and was once again called a Belorussian rayon. Both the village soviet and the local population of this ill-fated region were punished, almost one half of the population finding itself in Siberia eventually. Thus the completely innocent local populace paid dearly for the nationalities policy.

701 Belorussianization extended even into parts of the Red Army. The
563 Second Division in Minsk and the Thirty-third in Mogilev, for example, were renamed Belorussian territorial divisions in 1927. These two divisions were recruited exclusively in Belorussia -- it was intended to change the commands and the training into Belorussian in as short a period as possible. To prepare a staff of officers half the

438 A large-scale industry had developed.[1] In place of the semi-handicraft workshops which predominated in the old days, large modern
433 factories arose. The timber industry was modernized and developed for increased production of prefabricated dwellings, paper, cardboard, matches, chemical products, and artificial silk. Industries, such as meat-packing, starch and treacle, distilling, dairy produce, tanning, and flax, were highly developed. The mineral resources of the country served as a basis for the building up of the pottery, glass, cement, and similar industries. The engineering plants in Byelorussia turned out machine tools, agricultural machinery and peat-cutting machinery. The extraction of peat was conducted on an extensive scale.

433 After the Revolution, agriculture in Byelorussia also underwent
241 a fundamental change. The individual peasants united in collective
474 farms (kolkhozes) in which they jointly cultivated the soil and had their co-operative dairy farms, piggeries, poultry runs, and beehives. They received substantial assistance from the state in the form of financial credits, tractors, harvester combines, and other agricultural machinery, seeds, equipment for draining marsh-lands, and innumerable other kinds of assistance. Under the Soviet system the cultivated areas of Byelorussia increased considerably, and in 1937 exceeded that of 1913 by 35 per cent.

Area and Population

Area

131 The present area of the Byelorussian Republic is about 228,300 square kilometres. Nearly half of this territory was added in September 1939 when, after the collapse of the Polish State, Western Byelorussia, which had been seized by Poland in 1920, was rejoined to the B.S.S.R. as part of the Soviet Union. The area of this region was 108,000 square kilometres, and the population, 4.8 millions. Of this added territory, 35.5 per cent. was classified as arable, 23.5 per cent. as forests, 24 per cent. as pastures and meadows, and 1.5 per cent. as gardens and orchards.

In August 1940 the area of Byelorussia decreased somewhat when parts of the Vileika and the Baranovichi provinces were transferred
[728] from the B.S.S.R. to the Lithuanian Soviet Republic. Another small decrease occurred after the war in Europe had ended; in August 1945 a treaty was signed between Poland and the U.S.S.R., adjusting the Soviet-Polish frontier roughly along the "Curzon Line", with some deviations in Poland's favour. In consequence of this, Poland received a small strip of the territory which had been previously incorporated in the B.S.S.R., including the largest town of Western Byelorussia, Bialystok.

Population

162 At the census of January 1939 the population of the B.S.S.R. was 5,567,976 (an increase of 11.7 per cent. over December 1926, when the

[1] [Between 1919 and 1941 -- Analyst]

162 inhabitants numbered 4,983,240). The greatest increase had occurred in the towns, largely as a result of the growth of industry. From 1926 to 1939 the urban population of the B.S.S.R. rose from 847,830 to 1,372,522; while the numbers of rural inhabitants remained almost constant: 4,135,410 in 1926 as compared with 4,195,454 in 1939.

In the Soviet Union as a whole, the population had increased by 15.9 per cent., from 147 million in December 1926 to over 170 million in 1939. However, whereas the numbers living in towns had more than doubled (26 million to 55.9 million); the rural population had decreased from 120.7 million to only 114.5 million.

No census has been taken in the Soviet Union since the war; and the present population of the B.S.S.R. is not definitely known. In October 1939, after the incorporation of the ex-Polish regions, it was about 10,386,000 inhabitants.

The principal cities of Byelorussia with their 1939 populations are Minsk, the capital (238,772), Vitebsk (167,424), Gomel (144,169), Mogilev (99,440), and Bobruisk (84,107). As compared with 1926 the populations of all these towns had increased from 64 to 98 per cent. by 1939.

War Losses

721 On June 22, 1941, the German armies, supported by their satellites,
727 attacked the Soviet Union on its 1,500-mile European front; and in the early phase of the war, succeeded in overrunning the western Soviet Republics of Byelorussia and the Ukraine. For the second time in this century these areas were subjected to German occupation and devastation.

Lying directly in the path of the enemy advance towards Moscow, the Byelorussian Republic experienced terrible destruction. Just one month after the initial Nazi attack, the German News Agency announced that the Byelorussian town of Vitebsk (which the Nazis, according to their claim, had captured on July 11), had been "nothing but ruins when
727 occupied". As the war progressed, this bleak statement was to be true of most Byelorussian cities. In August 1941, according to an estimate by Allen and Muratoff,[1] the Germans were employing half their Panzer divisions and at least 40 per cent. of all their available forces in the Vitebsk-Smolensk-Mogilev sector.

Even after the Soviet Army retreat, Byelorussia continued to be a battle ground as Soviet guerillas carried on heroic warfare against the enemy occupying forces.

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1 The Russian Campaigns of 1941-43, Allen and Muratoff, Penguin Books, London, 1944.

had such a poor view of the strength of the Byelorussian national consciousness that they confined the Republic to a small border strip of 20,000 square miles and 1,500,000 inhabitants. Important Byelorussian districts with the towns of Vitebsk, Gomel and Mogilev remained within the R.S.F.S.R.

It took the Soviet central Government three years to transform the 'token republic' of Byelorussia into one which comprised the bulk of the Byelorussians living in a coherent territory in the western part of European Russia. On March 3rd, 1924, the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. issued a decree on the 'unification of all territories of the U.S.S.R. having a majority of Byelorussian population'. As a result of this decree the B.S.S.R. was able to enlarge its territory to 42,000 square miles and its population to 4,200,000.

Even after the 'unification decree' certain Byelorussian areas of the Soviet Union remained outside the B.S.S.R. and on December 6th, 1926, a new decree was published to rectify this situation by adding to Byelorussia some further territories including the town of Gomel. Through this second operation Byelorussia became a country of 48,000 square miles with nearly 5,000,000 inhabitants.

The 1926 census showed that great confusion persisted in Byelorussia as to who was a Byelorussian and who was not. Thus out of 4,017,000 ethnical Byelorussians only 3,350,000 declared their language to be Byelorussian. On the other hand the census recorded only 383,000 Great Russians in Byelorussia, although 1,165,000 people considered Great Russian as their language.

The basic difficulty which the Soviet régime encountered among the Byelorussians was, however, not the language question, but the fact that the Byelorussian people had hardly any 'revolutionary vanguard' in the form of an industrial proletariat worth mentioning. The five predominantly Byelorussian Governments ('Gubernyas') of the Czarist Empire had in 1913 but 69,000 industrial workers of whom by no means all belonged to the Byelorussian people.

Although Soviet statistics claimed that Byelorussian industry increased twenty-one-fold between 1913 and 1937, industrialization and urbanization made less progress in Byelorussia than in most other parts of European Russia. The major Byelorussian towns did not share in the general speedy growth of Soviet cities, nor did any new 'mushroom towns' emerge. Of the 174 towns of the Soviet Union which in 1939 had over 50,000 inhabitants only five were in Byelorussia and the largest Byelorussian town, Minsk, occupied the thirty-second place among the cities of the U.S.S.R. Byelorussia's towns were in the inter-war period only partially Byelorussian from the ethnical point of view, since they all had very large Jewish populations and included also a considerable number of Great Russians. In 1926 Minsk had 43·6 per cent Jewish

21: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1952 R1 Soviet Union
Belorussia RC1

inhabitants against 40·8 per cent Byelorussians and 7·3 per cent Great Russians. In Vitebsk, the second largest town, there were 45 per cent Jews, 30 per cent Byelorussians and 20 per cent Great Russians. Gomel, the third largest, had 40 per cent Jews, 29 per cent Great Russians and 22 per cent Byelorussians, and Mogilev 52·5 per cent Byelorussians and 39 per cent Jews.

The insignificance of Byelorussian industry and the absence of any Byelorussian town life worth mentioning explains to a great extent the difficulties which the Soviet régime experienced both on the political and on the cultural front in the Byelorussian S.S.R.

For a long time the communist leadership was unable to convince the more outstanding representatives of the Byelorussian people that class struggle had to be conducted in Byelorussia just as anywhere else in the Soviet Union. The leading Byelorussian intellectuals, who had close ties with the destitute peasant masses of their people, proclaimed the so-called *Bezburzhuaznost* (the non-existence of a bourgeoisie) of the Byelorussian nation. At the same time the Byelorussian nationalists or *Natsdemy* (National Democrats), as they were officially nicknamed, were profoundly pro-Western and anti-Russian in their outlook. They did not even like to be described as 'Byelorussians' or 'White Russians' since these terms simply degraded them, in their view, into a species of 'Russians'. They advocated in the twenties that the Byelorussians should be called *Krivichi*, thus identifying themselves with a Slav people inhabiting the territory of Byelorussia 1,000 years ago. The central Government opposed this suggestion. The Byelorussians had to keep the name which already externally associated them with the Great Russians. Nevertheless, the Byelorussian intelligentsia persisted in cultivating an ideology which maintained that no close relationship existed between the Byelorussians and Great Russians and that the former did not belong to the Eastern Slavs owing to their different origin, history and the character of their culture.[31] This Western orientation of the Byelorussian intelligentsia also had repercussions in the field of linguistics and led to the attempt to create a Byelorussian scientific terminology different from the Russian.

During the twenties, the communist régime did comparatively little against the nationalist tendencies in Byelorussia. In the absence of any communists capable of making a contribution to Byelorussian cultural life, the régime was forced during a certain time to leave the artistic and scientific activities of the nation in the hands of 'bourgeois nationalists'. Only towards the end of the twenties did the régime start purging the various cultural institutions of the country, and it was only in 1933 that the persecution of Byelorussian nationalism assumed major proportions. The year 1933 saw the discovery of the 'Byelorussian National Centre' which was charged with aiming at the establishment of a 'Byelorussian